

August 10, 2021

TO: Bill Collins  
FR: Barbara Wyatt  
RE: Criteria Consideration G and email dated 7-29-21

Hi Bill,

I'm sorry about the delay in getting back to you. When and how Criterion Consideration G is applied and determining when the period of significance starts if build-out is over time can be confusing. To recap the note you sent to me:

I'm having difficulty interpreting the guidance on the 50 year rule and Crit Con G. I have a consultant putting forward a nomination of a townhouse complex where planning began in 1971, construction in 1972, grand opening in 1973, and build out in 1974.

The consultant is arguing that Bull 15 guidance on Crit Con G says it's fine if a property began more than 50 years ago and it's "completion overlaps the fifty year period by a few years or less" (p. 41). Basically, he's arguing that it's 50 years from the start of construction. My view was that it was 50 years from the completion of construction (or for a district, completion of at least 50%), but I can't find an authoritative statement.

Two questions need to be addressed, does Criteria Consideration G need to be addressed and what is the appropriate period of significance? Reading between the lines, I assume the townhouses are considered to be of architectural significance under Criterion C, which understanding is reflected in my comments.

Your consultant maintains that Criteria Consideration G does not have to be met (the property does not need to be an integral part of a historic district or of exceptional importance) because construction began more than 50 years ago "but the completion overlaps the fifty year period by a few years or less". Based on the *Criteria* Bulletin and the *Suburbs* Bulletin, quoted below, we need to know the percentage of townhouses that are less than 50 years old and those that at least 50 years old. If the majority are more than 50, Criteria Consideration G does not need to be met if the period of significance begins more than 50 years ago.

The consultant seems to believe the period of significance should begin in 1972 when construction began. The *Suburbs* bulletin is a useful reference on this point. I suggest reviewing the sections "Evaluation under Criterion Consideration G" (p. 96) and "Defining Period of Significance" (p. 99). Both sections pertain to your situation, assuming the townhouse development is nominated as a district. Consider:

Because subdivisions were typically constructed over a period of many years, it is not uncommon to encounter a subdivision where streets and utilities were laid out and home construction begun more than 50 years ago, but where construction continued into the recent past. As a general rule, when a neighborhood as a whole was laid out

more than 50 years ago and the majority of homes and other resources are greater than 50 years of age, **a case for exceptional importance is not needed.** In such cases, the period of significance may be extended a reasonable length of time (e.g. five or six years) within the less-than-50-year period to recognize the contribution of resources that, although less-than-50-years of age, are consistent with the neighborhoods' historic plan and character. When the majority of homes and other resources, however, are less than 50 years of age, a case for **exceptional importance is required.** Subdivisions of this type found not to possess exceptional importance should be reevaluated when the majority of resources achieve 50 years of age (*Suburbs*, p. 96).

Based on this statement, the need to apply Criterion Consideration G is evident if the majority of resources are less than 50 years old. Actually, it isn't clear that any of them are 50 years old in your district. Regarding the beginning date of the period of significance, the *Suburbs* bulletin states:

The period of significance for neighborhoods qualifying under Criterion C generally corresponds to the actual years when the design was executed and construction took place; this will vary depending on the type of suburb and the circumstances under which it took form. . . . Generally, the period of significance for a historic suburb important under Criterion C begins with the date when the streets, houselots, and utilities were laid out and extends to the date when the plan was fully realized or the construction of homes substantially completed. The date of the historic plat may be used as the beginning date only when site improvements were begun shortly afterwards (*Suburbs*, p. 99).

(Note: I have only seen the last point applied once—when planning was a pivotal, significant event and construction began immediately.) There's more in this section about period of significance that you should review. Your application of these points can depend on the areas of significance and criteria applied to the townhouses; however, assuming architectural significance, it seems that the period of significance could begin in 1972 (but not 1971) and could extend to 1974. Criteria Consideration G should be applied if 100% of the development dates to less than 50 years ago. Technically, none of the properties are 50-years-old, but because it's so late in 2021, the nomination will probably be submitted to NPS very late in 2021 or in 2022, so NPS would probably acknowledge 50 years. If the consultant can demonstrate that more than 50% of the buildings were completed in 1972, Criteria Consideration G need not be applied. If G can't be justified and most construction dates to 1974, the consultant may want to wait a couple of years to nominate the townhouses.

I suggest you use the *Suburbs* Bulletin to frame your arguments to the consultant. Not having any details and not knowing if your office is a bit loose on calculating 50 years (i.e. you may not be bothered by a year of two, but if this is the case, it must be acknowledged in the nomination), you're in the best position to put the consultant on the correct course.

Please let me know if you have other questions. This gets confusing and sometimes you really need to sift through how the guidelines are articulated.

Best,  
Barbara